

# **Report of the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities**

(Ankara, 27-28 June, 2012)

The 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities was held in Ankara on 27-28<sup>th</sup> June, 2012. All the ECO Member States except Uzbekistan attend the Meeting. The delegations of the ECO, the ECO-TDB, Islamic Development Bank (IDB), ECO-CCI, UNECE, UNESCAP, and the representatives of the business community of the Member States attended the meeting. The list of participants is attached as Annex-I.

## **Agenda Item No.1**

### **Inauguration of the Meeting**

2. In his inaugural statement, Mr. Suleyman KARAMAN, Director General and Chairman of the Board of Turkish State Railways welcomed the delegations to Ankara and touched upon the goals and priorities for development of the railway network in the ECO region. He stated that Turkish Railway has constructed high-speed track on Ankara-Konya and Ankara-Eskishehir. The Turkish Railway will be connected through Iran-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan-China and Europe.

3. Mr. Altaf Asghar, Deputy Secretary General of ECO stated that globalization has led to significant changes in the dynamics of trade and transport in Asia and in the ECO region. An analysis of trade flows in the ECO region indicated a fair percentage increase in the intra-regional trade. Moreover, a high percentage of ECO countries' trade is with European countries and China. This trade acceleration is of particular importance for the volumes transported, the means of transport used and the construction of infrastructure along the key transport corridors. A copy of his statement is attached as Annex-II.

## **Agenda Item No. 2**

### **Election of the Chairman**

4. As per ECO Rules of Procedure, Mr Suleyman KARAMAN, President of Turkish State Railways was elected as the Chairman of the Meeting.

## **Agenda Item No. 3**

### **Adoption of the Agenda**

5. The Meeting adopted its Agenda as proposed by the ECO Secretariat. A copy of the adopted Agenda is attached as Annex-III.

## **Agenda Item No. 4**

### **Appointment of the Drafting Committee**

6. Under this item, the Meeting appointed a Drafting Committee to prepare the Draft Report.

## **Agenda Item No.5**

### **Statements/Country reports**

7. Under this Agenda Item, the participating delegations delivered statements on the latest developments in the railway sector since the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities (Islamabad, 2009). Copies of their statements are attached as Annex-IV.

## **Agenda Item No.6**

### **Expeditious implementation of the ECO's activities in the field of railway for which working groups/project arrangements have already been convened:**

8. Under this Agenda Item, the Meeting was briefed on the ECO's high priority projects given by the ECO for enhancement of regional cooperation in the field of railways. The Meeting considered concrete measures to resolve the obstacles and assure timely implementation of the following projects:

- i. The ECO Container Trains on Turkey-Iran-Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan (Istanbul-Almaty) and Iran-Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan (Bandar Abbas-Almaty) Routes:

9. Under this Sub-item, the Meeting reviewed the latest status of operationalization of the said routes. As regards the Istanbul -Tehran-Almaty route, the meeting noted that high tariffs, border crossing issues in the CIS Member States, shortage of cargo from the Almaty direction, lack of appropriate marketing strategies, and non-observance of the time schedule of the train, are the main problems, creating hindrances in the regular operation of the train.

10. As regards the Bandar Abbas – Almaty Container Train, the Meeting noted with satisfaction that the first test run of the train was launched from Bandar Abbas to Almaty in October 2011, and that so far Iran, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have confirmed for the return run of the train. Turkmenistan also showed their readiness to receive the return train during the meeting. The timetable and the tariff tables for this route have already been circulated by the Secretariat.

11. To resolve the abovementioned issues and regularize the operation along both routes, the meeting decided that the HLWG of these trains be convened on 27 August 2012, in the Islamic Republic of Iran at the level of vice Chairman of the railways of the enroute Member States. The enroute Member States nominated their Representative which includes: Mr. Fouladi, Deputy General Manager of Iran, Mr. Veysi Kurt, Vice President of TCDD, and Mr. Azad Almamadi from Turkmenistan as well as Mr. Altaf Asghar, ECO Deputy Secretary General. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will nominate their representatives in due course. The Meeting asked the enroute Member States to send their official nomination to the ECO Secretariat till 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

12. For Bandar Abbas Almaty train, the Meeting decided that no further confirmation will be sought from the Member States for the passage of the train along their territories, as it is already approved as a regular container train service along the route.

13. All the Member States were requested to take necessary measures to avoid the delay in train operation in their territories and observe the tariffs already agreed for the service.

ii. Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) Railway Project:

14. Under this Sub-item the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran provided comprehensive information on the progress to date with the construction of the railway line between Qazvin- Rasht- Astara. Out of the total 372 km length of this railway segment, 205 km is between Qazvin-Rasht. 75% progress on this section has been achieved. The feasibility study for the construction of the remaining section of 167 km from Rasht to Astara has been started by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

15. The delegation of Azerbaijan stated that they are ready to construct the 8 km segment in their territory.

16. Under this Agenda Item, the Meeting decided to establish a High Level Working Group for this project. The delegation of Azerbaijan offered to host the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the HLWG in Baku. The date and details of hospitality will be conveyed to the ECO Secretariat by the Azerbaijan through diplomatic channel.

iii. Uzen (Kazakhstan)-Kyzylkiya-Bereket-Etrek (Turkmenistan)-Gorgan (Iran) Railway Project.

17. The meeting noted with satisfaction that there has been significant progress in the construction of the Uzen-Gyzylgaya-Bereket-Etrek-Gorgan transnational railway with a total length of about 900 kilometers, about 146 km of which is in Kazakhstan, 700 km in Turkmenistan and 90 km in Iran. The Meeting hoped that the construction phase will be completed by the end of 2012.

18. The Meeting also decided that the third meeting of the Trilateral Coordination Committee of this project, established under the aegis of the ECO, would be convened in the Islamic Republic of Iran back to back with the Meeting of High Level Working Group of Bandar Abbas-Almaty and Almaty-Istanbul on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2012. The meeting would be preceded by the field visit of the route, which would be coordinated by the ECO Secretariat.

19. The Meeting appreciated the Kazakhstan for completing the construction of railway section in their territory and requested the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan to complete the track and other related projects by the end of 2012.

iv. Construction of Standard-gauge Railway connecting China and Europe via Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran-Turkey

20. The meeting noted that pursuant to the Meeting of the Ministers of the enroute countries (Dushanbe, October 2010) contacts have been established between the Member States to expedite the commencement of this project.

21. The Meeting appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for granting 1 million USD to carry out the feasibility study in the territory of Tajikistan and hoped that the study would be completed within the next four months.

22. The delegation of Kyrgyzstan informed the Meeting that feasibility study for construction of China –Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway corridor is being conducted with the help of CRBC, a Chinese Company. It is expected that the Feasibility Study would be completed by the end of 2012. However, the said study does not include the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran-Turkey segment. Kyrgyz delegation considered it necessary to study the economic viability; technical standard and advantages of the project in comparison with other railway corridors. He requested the ECO Secretariat to help in securing finance for the study on this segment as well. All the ECO Member States were also requested to assist the Kyrgyz Republic in this regard.

23. The delegation of Afghanistan stated that the pre-feasibility study from Herat to Sherkhan Bandar has already been completed and feasibility study from Mezar-e Sharif to Aqine would be started in 2012. The Chinese company will complete feasibility study from Kuanduz to Mazar-e-Sharif in 2013. They have requested IDB, ADB and other international financial institutions to finance the railway projects in Afghanistan.

24. The Meeting decided that the second meeting of the Ministers of the enroute countries would be held in 2012 in Dushanbe (upon official confirmation of the concerned authorities of Tajikistan) or any other venue. The exact dates and venue will be communicated to the Member States in due course.

v. The ECO Container Trains on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Route

25. The Meeting noted with satisfaction that the ECO Container Train on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Route has begun its scheduled and regular operation since 2010. It also noted that the issues related to this train are pursued under a High Level Working Group of the enroute Member States.

26. The Meeting adopted the minutes of the Meeting of the Presidents of the Railways of the enroute Member States which was held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012. A copy of the Minutes is attached as Annex-V.

**Agenda Item No. 7**

**Consideration of the comprehensive ECO railway Network Development Plan, proposed under the aegis of the ECO\IDB Joint Project on TTFA.**

27. The Meeting considered the “ECO Railway Network Development Plan” which has been prepared under the aegis of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on TTFA.

28. Appreciating the ECO and IDB for preparing this comprehensive study, the Meeting adopted the ECO Railway Network Development Plan together with the ECO Rail corridors, with extensions and branches, as identified in the Plan.

29. The Meeting asked the ECO Secretariat to take necessary measures for securing funds required for implementation of this comprehensive plan in partnership with IDB, ADB, ECO-TDB and other international, regional and national funding institutions.

30. The Meeting asked the ECO to set up coordination mechanisms in the form of high level working groups or committees of the enroute countries for the new corridors.

### **Agenda Item No. 8**

#### **Consideration of the railway related provisions of the TTFA**

31. The meeting approved recommendations of the ECO/UNECE Joint Workshop on Unified Railway Law, held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to follow up the implementation of these recommendations in cooperation with the Member States and the UNECE. A copy of the recommendations is attached as Annex-VI.

32. The delegation of Pakistan stated that COTIF Convention has been approved by the Cabinet of Pakistan and necessary preparation work will be completed in few months for accession to COTIF.

33. The Meeting welcomed with satisfaction that Tajikistan has recently joined to several international conventions and agreements in the field of transit and transport.

34. The delegation of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) stated that IDB cooperation with ECO member countries is ongoing. The following projects have been completed or under consideration by the IDB:

- Iran and Iraq railway line project
- Procurement of High Speed sets for completed Ankara-Konya railway
- A railway project in Turkmenistan
- The up-gradation of railway line on Quetta-Taftan in Pakistan
- ECO/IDB project on customs and transit trade

35. The Meeting noted the information given by the UNESCAP Secretariat on the status of implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway and the assistance offered to ECO Member countries to help them become parties to the Agreement through accession (Afghanistan and Turkmenistan) or ratification, acceptance or approval (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkey).

36. The Meeting also noted that one of the tasks of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network is to consider proposals for amendments to the Agreement, in particular its Annex 1 describing the routes of the Trans-Asian Railway in Member countries. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged member countries that are Parties to the Agreement to send their proposals for amendments to the UNESCAP Secretariat to reflect recent developments in the network. These proposals will be considered at the third meeting of the Working Group scheduled to be held in the second half of 2013.

37. Under this Agenda Item, the Member States did not propose any amendments to the technical parameters and criteria related to railway operations specified in Annex III of the TTFA. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran will forward the proposed amendments in Annex-III if required. The Meeting also approved the ECO Railway Transit Routes map as part of Annex I to TTFA.

**Agenda Item No. 9**  
**Any other business**

38. Under this Agenda Item, the Meeting congratulated the Republic of Turkey for successful completion of the projects for construction of high speed passenger trains on Ankara Konya and Ankara-Eskishehir directions. As suggested by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the meeting asked the ECO Secretariat to include development of passenger trains in agenda of the railway related meetings and projects. As a first step, the meeting asked the Secretariat to analyse the possibilities for extending high speed passenger trains between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey in close contact with the concerned authorities of the said Member States.

39. Under this agenda Item, the Meeting also welcomed the invitation extended by UNESCAP to member countries and the ECO Secretariat to take part in the third session of the Committee on Transport that will take place in Bangkok from 10-12 October 2012. It also called the Member States for actively participating in the Ministerial Conference on Public Private Partnership for Infrastructure Development, to be held in Tehran on 11-14 November 2012 in partnership with UNESCAP. The Expert Group Meeting and Business Forum will also be held one day before the Ministerial Meeting. The delegation of Turkey supported the UNESCAP for organizing the Ministerial Conference on PPPs in Tehran. Turkey will participate in the Meeting.

40. The Meeting appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey for offering to organize training courses and capacity building programmes for the railway staff of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The ECO Secretariat was asked to follow up this matter.

**Agenda Item No.10**  
**Dates and Venue of the next Meeting**

41. Under this Agenda Item, appreciating the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Meeting decided that the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Railway Administration will be held in Tehran. The date and venue will be decided by the ECO Secretariat in consultation with the host authorities.

**Agenda Item No.11**  
**Adoption of the Report**

42. Under this agenda item, the Meeting considered and adopted its Report.

**Agenda Item No.12**  
**Vote of thanks and closing of the Meeting**

43. Under this item, the Heads of delegations offered Vote of Thanks to the Government of the Republic of Turkey, in particular His Excellency Mr. Suleiman Karaman, the President of the Turkish State Railways, as well as the ECO Secretariat for successful organization of the Meeting.

44. The Chairman announced the closing of the Meeting.

**List of participations of the Heads of Railway Administration  
of the ECO Member States  
(Ankara, 27-28<sup>th</sup> June, 2012)**

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75.	<b>UNECE</b>	Mr. Konstantinos Alexopoulos	Secretary, UNECE, Rail Secretariat, Transport Trends and Economics Secretariat	Tel: + Fax: + Cell: + Email:
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## **Minutes of the Meeting**

On 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012 a trilateral meeting of the railway of authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the Republic of Turkey was held in Ankara regarding the ECO Container Trains on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Route. In order to assure the smooth operation of this strategic train, the Meeting made the following decisions:

1. Taking into account the actual performance of the Train, the total travel duration of the train was set at 18 days (3.5 days in Turkey, 4 days in Iran and 10 days in Pakistan). Pakistan would do its level best to reduce the duration to 8 days. The detailed timetable would be amended accordingly with coordination by the ECO Secretariat.
2. The operation of the train would be resumed from 15 July 2012 with dispatching the train from Istanbul and vice versa. Since then the train would be regularly operated fortnightly, if cargo is available, to assure the credibility of the service to shippers. Iran and Pakistan would reduce their tariffs to the levels announced by Turkey.
3. Turkey would arrange cargo from Istanbul to Islamabad and Pakistan would arrange cargo in the opposite direction. To avoid monopoly, each country may nominate more than one forwarder. Turkey proposed to use this train for transportation of Afghan cargo. Pakistan Railways agreed to the proposal subject to amendment in the existing Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). However, Iran showed their reservations to this proposal and ECO Secretariat was asked to follow up the issue with concerned authorities of the Member States.
4. Each member states would nominate two focal points solely responsible for the affairs of this train. The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the HLWG would be held in Iran in 2012. Its agenda would include, inter alia, formulation of short term, mid-term and long term plans for development of the train to its full capacity, leading to the ultimate goal of reducing the duration of the train to eight days subject to up-gradation of Quetta-Taftan section. The study conducted by TOBB would be regarded as completed and the results should be conveyed at the earliest to the ECO Secretariat for consideration of the HLWG.

**Abdol Ali Saheb Mohammadi,  
Deputy Minister & President  
of The Railway of IR. Iran**

**Muhammad Junaid Qureshi,  
General Manager  
(Operations)/Chief Executive  
Pakistan**

**Suleyman KARAMAN,  
President of Turkish State  
Railways**

**Altaf Asghar  
ECO Deputy Secretary General**



**ECO - UNECE Joint Workshop on Unified Railway Law**  
**Ankara, 26 June 2012**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The ECO – UNECE Joint Workshop on unified railway law was held in Ankara on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2012. Delegations from all ECO member states except Uzbekistan attended the meeting. The delegations from ECO Secretariat, UNECE and UNSCAP also participated in the workshop.

The Meeting thoroughly discussed the existing situation of the legal regimes governing transit traffic by rail in different regions of the world. It also considered the recent attempts for unification of railway law in international rail transport in the context of the UNECE. At the end of the Workshop, the following conclusions and recommendations were issued by the Workshop:

1. The Meeting concluded that long distance Euro-Asian rail transport operations of goods and passengers may significantly increase if a unified global railway convention exists that facilitates the development of fast, reliable and seamless rail and intermodal transport services along the Euro-Asian links and globally;
2. The meeting noted the progress achieved by the other transport modes in harmonizing and simplifying their legal framework, making it imperative to ensure the same business conditions among these modes and rail transport;
3. The meeting recommended that the unification of railway regimes is imperative for railways operations and efficiency;
4. The meeting recommended the ECO countries to support the strategy enshrined in the UNECE Position Paper towards unified railway law globally (ECE/TRANS/2011/3, including the agreed-upon 3 step approach (short/medium and long-term) to achieve tangible results in due course;

5. The meeting recommended and hoped that the objectives of the position paper would be achieved by the target year of 2015 or even earlier as the time is matured and the project should be finalised as soon as possible;
6. The meeting recommended ECO countries to participate and contribute at the UNECE Expert Group towards unified railway law works and meetings as to share their experience, provide inputs from their rail authorities and assure multi – country inputs for this very important project for railways;
7. The meeting recommended ECO Secretariat to continue its constructive cooperation with UNECE to actively participate and contribute herewith to the work of the UNECE Expert Group developing a unified and global convention for railways;
8. The Meeting also recommended the ECO and UNECE to consider cooperation in preparing the draft rules and regulation envisaged in the TTFA concerning transit traffic by rail.
9. Emphasising on further work for dissemination of information and advice on various legal operation and technical aspects of the proposed unified railway law the meeting asked the ECO and UNECE to organized follow up events to the present workshop at regional and national levels.

At the end, the Meeting thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey in particular the Turkish Railway as well as the ECO Secretariat for excellent arrangement and exemplary hospitality offered to the participants. The Workshop also appreciated the UNECE for active participation in the Workshop and valuable inputs in the discussion.

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